It does exist! Identifying actuation of language change

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On the island of Rapa Iti, one of the least populated islands in French Polynesia, a century and a half of indirect socio-political pressure from Tahiti has resulted in a complex linguistic situation. Old Rapa, the indigenous Eastern Polynesian language of Rapa Iti, is no longer spoken regularly in any cultural domains and has been replaced in most institutional domains by Tahitian (Walworth, 2017). Reo Rapa, a "shift-break" contact language that fuses Tahitian and Old Rapa, has replaced the indigenous Old Rapa language between most people in home and social interaction (Walworth, 2017). Lastly, people under the age of 50 use an anti-Tahitian reactive variety of Reo Rapa, termed New Rapa (Walworth, 2017).

This paper investigates the development of recent language change in Rapa Iti by addressing the factors of cultural identity that have triggered New Rapa, the specific people responsible for creating this linguistic variety, and the linguistic processes by which it continues to evolve. Ultimately, through this example, this paper argues that actuation is possible to locate and that language change can be socially motivated, even by a small group of individuals.

Reactive change and linguistic nostalgia
New Rapa represents an attempt by younger age groups in Rapa Iti to reverse the shift to the Tahitian language. The creation and use of New Rapa is a form of resistance to Tahitian linguistic and cultural assimilation, a sort of *reactive language change*, and a reflection of an attempt to return to a unique Rapa Iti identity. New Rapa thus reflects a *linguistic nostalgia*, a longing for the old ways of speech (Walworth, 2017).

Processes of language creation
New Rapa exhibits an attempt to "Rapanise" the Tahitian elements of Reo Rapa in order to make Reo Rapa sound less like Tahitian. This is done by the following processes: (1) phonologically modifying Tahitian lexemes to reflect Old Rapa's consonant phoneme inventory (Table 1); (2) borrowing terms from other languages that have the same consonant phonemes as Old Rapa ; and (3) incorporating the creations of one partiuclar "linguistic leader" (Labov, 2001; Baker, 2008).

Table 1 *Some Rapanized forms in New Rapa with conflicting Old Rapa forms*

	Old Rapa	Tahitian	New Rapa	ProtoPolynesian	Gloss
1	*ka*	*'ua*	*kua*	*kua	'perfective'
2	*'anga*	*'ohipa*	*'o'ipa*	*sanga	'work'
3	*ao*	*mahana*	*ma'ana*	*qaho	'day'

Visible actuation and socially motivated change
The type linguistic innovation occurring in Rapa Iti demonstrates historical changes that are intentionally initiated by individuals in a speech community, and which do not follow regular sound correspondences. This kind of deliberate change provides evidence for socially motivated change and furthermore supports theories that sound change is not always "linguistically" motivated (Blust, 2005; Milroy, 2003). New Rapa furthermore demonstrates visible actuation, which is rarely possible to find (Labov, 1972). While there are many examples of language contact affecting language change, there are very few that can point to the precise moment or exact person that initiates a specific change (Labov, 1972). New Rapa therefore represents one of the few cases available for study that provides concrete evidence for socially motivated actuation of language change.

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